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McGOWN'S PASS AND VICINITY

A SKETCH OF THE MOST INTERESTING SCENIC AND HISTORIC SECTION OF CENTRAL PARK IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BY
EDWARD HAGAMAN HALL

[FIRST THOUSAND]

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New York, 1905

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Gift
Mrs. Opal L. Kunz
Sept. 13 1934

WPA 20034

Introduction.

CENTRAL PARK of New York City is the most famous city park in America. From both the scenic and historic standpoints, the most interesting section of the park is the zone lying between the latitude of 106th street and 110th street, which was added to the Park in 1863. At a meeting held in May, 1863, the Commissioners of Central Park formally declared that this addition "gives completeness to the territorial area of the Park; *it contains its finest natural scenery*, and will be regarded as one of the achievements of the Board that will stand as a memorial of its judgment, of its integrity of purpose, and of its persevering determination in the accomplishment of a great public benefit,"—words which have lost none of the force of truthfulness in the forty-two years which have elapsed since they were written.

The foresight which has preserved in its natural condition the rugged heights in the northern part of the Park has also fortunately saved from the obliterating advance of modern improvement some interesting vestiges of stirring events in the two wars with Great Britain. To assist in the identification of these sites and to recall something of the history of McGown's Pass and vicinity, the following pages have been written.

It cannot fail to add to the interest of the visitor to the Park to recall that the Royal Governor, Council, and Colonial Assembly once met at McGown's Pass; that it was fortified and occupied during the Revolution; that Washing-

ton himself was there; that it was again fortified in the War of 1812–15; that for many years it was the seat of a celebrated charitable and educational institution,—the Academy and Convent of Mt. St. Vincent; that wounded soldiers were nursed there during the Civil War; and that from the first stone tavern kept by Jacob Dyckman, Jr., in the first half of the eighteenth century, down to the present McGown's Pass Tavern, it has been devoted almost without interruption to one form or another of public hospitality.

It is gratifying to learn, as these pages go to press, that Park Commissioner John J. Pallas has given instructions for the mounting of the two historic cannon which have for years lain rusting upon the ground at Fort Clinton; and that he will place upon the mount an historical inscription prepared by the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society. The alternative inscriptions recommended by the Society's Committee on Sites and Inscriptions, consisting of Albert Ulmann, Francis Whiting Halsey, Reginald Pelham Bolton, and the writer, are as follows:

This Eminence
Commanding the Approach to New York City by Way of
McGOWN'S PASS
Was occupied by British Troops September 15, 1776, and was
Fortified with the Heights Westward to the Hudson River
During the Revolution.
Evacuated November 21, 1783.

Here, on August 18, 1814, the Citizens of New York Began
FORT CLINTON
Which, with Fort Fish and Nutter's Battery Adjacent,
Formed Part of a Similar Chain of Defenses
in the Second War with Great Britain.

Erected by the Commissioners of Parks
1905.

Or this shorter inscription :

This Eminence
Commanding the Approach to New York by Way of
McGOWN'S PASS
Was occupied by British Troops September 15, 1776
and Evacuated November 21, 1783.

Here, Beginning August 18, 1814,
The Citizens of New York Built
FORT CLINTON
which, with Fort Fish and Nutter's Battery Adjacent,
was designed to Protect the City
in the Second War with Great Britain.

Erected by the Commissioners of Parks
1905.

With such an inscription on Fort Clinton, and simple signs reading "FORT FISH" and "NUTTER'S BATTERY" on the other sites, the visitor will be greatly assisted in identifying the landmarks more fully described in the following pages.

E. H. H.

New York, August, 1905.

McGOWN'S PASS AND VICINITY

I.

CIVIL HISTORY UP TO THE REVOLUTION.

TO the thoughtful person contemplating a landscape of great natural beauty, it gives increased pleasure to know that the ground which he sees before him has been the scene of important human events.

The visitor to Central Park, in New York City, who has passed through the scenes of varied beauty with which the most artfully concealed art has assisted Nature to delight the eye in other parts of the Park and has come to the bolder scenery at the northern end, cannot fail to find an added interest in the knowledge that these heights,* overlooking the plains of Harlem, were twice the theatre of stirring historical events.

The relation of the events which we are about to recall

* The highest elevation in the northern end of the Park is what was called the Great Hill, now the Circle, between the West Drive and 105th street. It is 130 feet above the water (4).

to the striking features of natural scenery so fortunately preserved in the great City's beautiful Reservation is not accidental. There is a very strong probability that in a region which has any history at all, the notable features of the landscape will be intimately connected with that history. It was as natural for the Indians to select a rock like the Devil's Dans Kammer in Newburgh Bay for their religious rites, or Council Rock in Monroe County for their Councils, as it was for the white men to choose Plymouth Rock as a secure landing for the Pilgrims. It was a common instinct which led the Indians to assemble in conference under the great elm tree in Cambridge before the advent of the European, and Washington to stand under it when he assumed command of the Continental Army. It is the first impulse of the military engineer to erect his field fortifications on commanding heights, which are invariably picturesque. When Nature piled up the rocky pinnacle on which Edinburgh Castle is perched, and molded the surrounding hills, she not only built the foundation for one of the most picturesque cities of the Old World, but she also built a theatre for human drama. Quebec is the most picturesque City in English-speaking America, and, as might be expected, her coronet of battlements tells the story of the marriage of Nature and History, of Beauty and Tragedy.

Illustrations might be multiplied indefinitely to show the intimate connection between bold natural scenery and notable human annals. It is not surprising, therefore, that the striking topographical features in the vicinity of McGown's Pass,* in the northeastern corner of Central Park,

* McGown is here spelled as the family spelled it when they owned and occupied the property. It is spelled thus by Daniel McGown in a deed executed by him in 1758 (10); and by the McGown heirs when they parted with the property in 1845 (11).

should have stories, if not sermons, in their stones, and books in their running brooks.

In order fully to understand what follows, it is necessary to describe what constituted McGown's Pass.

When Manhattan Island was in its natural condition, a broad inlet called Harlem Creek made in directly westward from the Harlem River between 106th street and 108th street,* its head extending up to the heights of Central Park just within the Fifth avenue line. On the south side of the creek was an extensive and impassable marsh. The creek received the waters of three rivulets, the largest of which rose near the Hudson River in the Hollow Way of Manhattanville. Another, which still contributes to the beauty of Central Park, originated somewhere in the vicinity of 95th street and 9th avenue and entered Central Park at 101st street and 8th avenue. Continuing in a generally northeasterly direction to the intersection of the imaginary lines of 6th avenue and 109th street, it flowed around the base of the heights in the northeastern part of the park and emptied into Harlem Creek at 5th avenue and 107th street.

The course of this little stream within the Park can be followed to-day, and is one of the most romantic walks in that enclosure. Entering at the West 100th street gate, one sees lying in the ancient valley immediately to the northward a charming little pond named the Pool, which is an expansion of this streamlet. Following its outlet through the stone arch called the Glenspan Bridge under the West Drive, one comes to the Loch (once the Lotos Pond); and continuing through another stone arch called Huddlestone

* For the sake of brevity and convenience of description, modern boundary lines will be mentioned as if they previously existed. The reader will understand, of course, that Central Park and the numbered streets mentioned herein had not been laid out at the time of which we are speaking.

Bridge under the East Drive, he reaches the Harlem Mere, formed by the further impounding of its waters.

Just before the stream left the Park and entered into Harlem Creek, it formerly received from the north another tributary, originating somewhere west of 8th avenue and 110th street. This has been obliterated. (References, 8, 13, 22 and 44). Early in the history of Harlem, the flat land lying north of the Central Park Heights and east of Morningside Heights was acquired by Abraham de la Montanye and was known as Montanye's Flat (40), and the stream issuing therefrom was called Montanye's Rivulet. The Montanye farm subsequently passed into possession of the Nutter family (40), from which the name of Nutter's Battery was derived. (See page 36 following.)

The oldest long thoroughfare on Manhattan Island, following, quite likely, an ancient Indian trail—for the children of the forest were wonderful civil engineers, and, with their natural instinct for choosing lines of least resistance, mapped out many of the great avenues of communication of their white successors—was the ancient Post Road, or King's Bridge Road, connecting the little old City of New York at the southern end of the island with the bridge across Spuyten Duyvil Creek. This old road ran up on the easterly side of Central Park, approximately along the line of 2d and 3d avenues, until it reached about 81st street and 3d avenue. Then, to avoid the swamps and inlets tributary to the East and Harlem Rivers, it bent sharply to the northwestward, entered Central Park at 92d street and Fifth avenue, and escaped the head of Harlem Creek by passing over the height on which now stands McGown's Pass tavern. At the crest of the hill, the road was coincident with the present East Drive at that point, but as it went over the hill and started on the down grade, it did not curve to the west-

ward as the present drive does, but bent slightly to the right. At the foot of the declivity, about midway between the lines of 108th and 109th streets and 5th and 6th avenues, it crossed the rivulet before mentioned, and then forked, the left fork continuing to King's Bridge and the right fork to Harlem Village. At a later period, the fork was made on the south side of the rivulet. (References, 8, 13, 22 and 44.) With the aid of the accompanying map, the hollow of the old road-bed, forming the original McGown's Pass, can be traced distinctly from the present East Drive down to the edge of Harlem Mere.

The hill on which McGown's Pass tavern stands has an elevation of from 80 to 90 feet above tide water. This eminence, like Bayard's Hill, Richmond Hill, Murray Hill, and the heights on which the old Beekman, Apthorpe, Hamilton and Morris Mansions stood, or stand, was early acquired by the prosperous colonist for a building site.

Up to the year 1712, this property had remained part of the Common Lands of the old town of Harlem, and appears to have had no special designation, although the rivulet at the foot of the hill was referred to as "the run." In the drawing of lots in 1712 by the citizens of Harlem, Samuel Waldron drew lot No. 7 in the first division, a ten acre portion of which on the east side of the highway was identical with the McGown place of later days. By exchange, Abraham de la Montanye added this to a lot which he possessed adjacent on the south, including the site of the Black Horse tavern of later times. In 1729, Montanye sold out to his brother-in-law George Dyckman, and in 1748 George Dyckman sold 20 acres to Jacob Dyckman, Jr., and Adolph Benson. The latter two divided the property, Jacob Dyckman, Jr., taking the portion which he afterwards sold to Mrs. McGown. Here he laid the foundation for the tradi-

tions of public hospitality which have since characterized the place by maintaining a public house for about ten years (40).

That the first tavern erected on this historic property was an institution of capacity and dignity is evidenced by the interesting fact that the Colonial Assembly met here from October 24 to November 11, 1752, when the Assembly Chamber in the old English City Hall (later Federal Hall) which stood at Wall and Nassau streets, was out of repair. The Governor and Council, while in attendance on the sessions, stayed at the neighboring house of Benjamin Benson, which stood where the house of Alderman S. Benson McGown subsequently stood, in East 106th street near 3 avenue (40, 3).

The Royal Governor of the Colony at that time was Admiral George Clinton (who is not to be confounded with George Clinton, first Republican Governor of the State). He was a son of the Earl of Lincoln and father of Sir Henry Clinton, the latter of whom came to McGown's Pass in 1776 (as we shall see a little later) under circumstances of which Sir George little dreamed as he presided over the distinguished body assembled here in 1752.

The meeting of the Colonial Government at this place is confirmed by the following extract from a law which the Assembly passed on the last day of its session, November 11. The act, entitled, "An act for the payment of the salaries and services of the Government until the first day of September, 1753," after making appropriations for the salaries of Governor Clinton and other functionaries, continues:

"To Alexander Lamb as Doorkeeper to the General Assembly . . . for providing firewood for the use of the General Assembly; for payment of the use of Mr.

Dykeman's house; and for sundry repairs necessary to be made in the Assembly Chamber in the City Hall in New York, the sum of twenty-four pounds and ten shillings" (3).

It is a tribute to the natural attractions of the McGown's Pass locality, which have never been lost, and to the amplitude of the accommodations provided by Mine Host Dyckman's capacious stone tavern, that the Government preferred coming here to holding its meeting in one of the numerous city taverns.

And apropos of Colonial taverns and Colonial Governors in general, it may be mentioned in passing that there was often a peculiar bond of sympathy between the two. The observant Professor Peter Kalm, who visited New York in 1748 (during Governor Clinton's incumbency), remarks upon this subject that "the King appoints the Governor according to his royal pleasure, but the inhabitants of the Province make up His Excellency's salary. Therefore, a man entrusted with this place has greater or lesser revenues according as he knows how to gain the confidence of the inhabitants. There are examples of Governors in this and other provinces of North America, who, by their dissensions with the inhabitants of their respective governments, have lost their whole salary, His Majesty having no power to make them pay it. If a Governor had no other resource in these circumstances he would be obliged either to resign his office or be content with an income too small for his dignity; or else conform himself in everything to the inclinations of the inhabitants. But there are several stated profits which in some measure make up for this. No one is allowed to keep a public house without the Governor's leave, which is only to be obtained by a certain fee, according to the circumstances of the person. Some governors, therefore, when the inhabitants refused to pay them a salary,

have hit upon the expedient of doubling the number of inns in their province" (46).

Clinton was one of the class of Governors to whom Prof. Kalm refers who was perpetually at odds with the people. He insisted on the dignity of the Royal prerogative, and could not conciliate the inhabitants. The consequence was, he had a strenuous time with an obstreperous Assembly over his salary, and complained bitterly to the Lords of Trade of his meagre support (35).

But far be it from us to suggest that the inauguration of a tavern at McGown's Pass during Clinton's administration was an artificial product of the impoverished Governor's needs and consequent enterprise. There was, no doubt, a natural demand for it just at this place. The brevity of the intervals between the numerous houses of refreshment that sprang up along the ancient thoroughfare from the Battery to Spuyten Duyvil Creek—the Province Arms, the Bull's Head, the Dove, the Black Horse, Dyckman's (later McGown's), Day's, the Bluebell, the Dutch tavern at King's Bridge, and their intermediates, are eloquent testimonials of the consuming thirst generated by the journey from one end of the island to the other, and the pressing need for frequent places of alleviation. And we may conclude that Dyckman filled the proverbial "long felt want" when he opened the pioneer inn on the heights in the northeastern corner of Central Park, whether he had gubernatorial incitement thereto or not.

But grateful as a suffering public must have been to the founder of the first "hospice" at this midway station between the termini of the island, it has allowed his name to be forgotten, so far as identification with this spot is concerned, and has perpetuated in its stead, the name of the next owner, to whom we must now give our attention.

In the year 1740, Captain Daniel McGown, a seafaring man whose name indicates his Scotch antecedents, married the widow Shourd (born Catharine Benson). They had one child, Andrew, who was born in 1742 (40), and whom we shall call Andrew McGown, Sr.* Captain McGown was lost at sea some years before the Revolution (40),—in 1759 one writer says (33),—and soon thereafter his widow Catharine bought from Jacob Dyckman, Jr., the old stone tavern on the hill and 10 acres of land. Dyckman retired to his property near Spuyten Duyvil, and Mrs. McGown, with the assistance of her son Andrew, maintained the tavern (40). Thereafter the place was known as McGown's Pass.

The question has often been asked, "What was (or is) McGown's Pass?" Gen. Joseph G. Swift, in his description of the works at McGown's Pass in 1814, says: "Over McGown's Pass is a blockhouse" (48). This blockhouse was half-way down the northeast side of the hill from the McGown house to the bridge, and spanned a gap in the earthworks through which the highway ran. The road here ran through a shallow hollow between the great rock on which Fort Clinton was built on one side, and a lesser outcropping on the other side. Gen. Swift evidently regarded this little hollow on the hill-side as the Pass, and the general usage of the word would seem to confirm the opinion that either this, or the road running through it, was the Pass.

John Randel, Jr., civil engineer, who surveyed the upper part of the island for the Commissioners of 1807, says,

* Andrew McGown, Sr., married on Nov. 21, 1784, Margaret Benson (b. 1766; d. 1851). He died Oct. 16, 1820. He had a son Andrew, styled Major Andrew, or Andrew, Jr., who was born in 1786 and died March 2, 1870; and another named Samson B., who was born in 1797, and was an alderman of New York (40).

"The Barrier Gate at McGown's Pass was at 107th street, 116 yards east of Sixth Avenue" (39). This coincides with Gen. Swift's location, at the point designated as McGown's Pass on the accompanying map of Central Park.

A more typical Pass, however, is the valley, running in a generally northeasterly direction from 101st street and 8th avenue to the edge of Harlem Plain at the foot of McGown's Hill. The hills on either side of this valley are from 90 to 130 feet high. Through this valley ran the rivulet before described and now converted into the Pool, the Loch, and its connecting thread. In an illustrated description of the northern end of Central Park printed in 1859 the valley is called "McGown's Pass." "The extreme northwest corner of the Park," it says, "is occupied by a large hill, which bounds McGown's Pass on the west" (50).

Another and more modern writer refers to the rivulet "flowing through the Pass" (22), meaning this transverse valley.

Thus, while the topography of the locality tends to confirm the latter meaning, the usage of the majority of early map makers and writers goes to support General Swift's meaning; and we are pretty safe in regarding McGown's Pass as that portion of the ancient but still traceable King's Bridge Road, running from the East Drive at McGown's Pass Tavern, down across the lawn on the northeast side of the hill to the present Harlem Mere.

Here at this much traveled "Pass," the widow McGown and her son Andrew not only found mental diversion from the traffic of this important thoroughfare, but they also found ample patronage for the public house which they maintained. Prior to the Revolution, McGown's Pass Tavern was a favorite resort for gentlemen coming from the City with their foxhounds to hunt (40).

On maps of the Revolutionary period, the house on the east side of the road corresponding to the present McGown's Pass Tavern is marked "McGown's," * and on the other side of the road, a few rods to the south, is the "Black Horse Tavern" (31).

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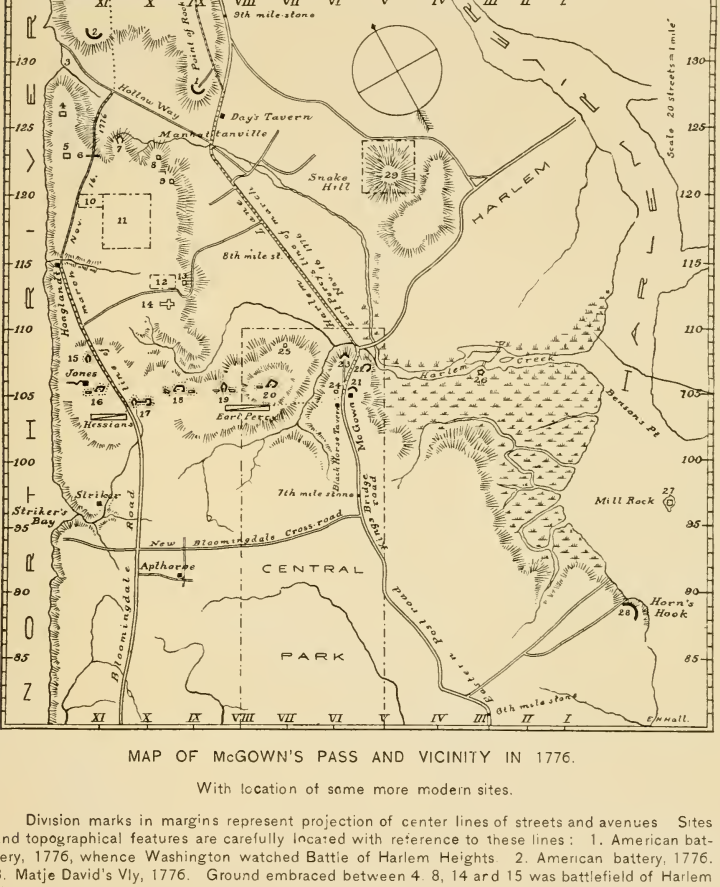
* It may not be amiss to mention two other remotely possible explanations which have occurred to the writer, without claiming anything for their validity.

The sharp westward bend of the King's Bridge Road which carried it over McGown's Hill was for the purpose of passing the head of Harlem Creek and marsh which extended up to its base. The "Pass" may have meant the place where this notable and inconvenient obstacle was passed.

The other suggestion is based on a curious use of the word "Pass" by seafaring men, which can yet be observed at Nantucket and perhaps elsewhere. It is not mentioned in the dictionaries. When one of these old mariners decides to retire from the sea and live on land, he selects the site of his home with reference to its commanding what he calls a "water pass," or a "land pass." A "water pass" is a place where he can enjoy the diversion of seeing ships pass by. A "land pass" is a place where he can view objects passing on land. The word as used by the natives seems to apply more to the view than to the route of travel (45).

Now there is no record to show that before the advent of the McGowns at the place under discussion it was called a Pass. Daniel McGown was a sea-captain. Soon after his widow acquired the property it became known as McGown's Pass. With the knowledge of these facts and the custom of which we have spoken, we might be tempted to find the solution of our problem in the "land pass" of the old seaman's phrase, if the documentary evidence were not so strongly in another direction.



MAP OF McGOWN'S PASS AND VICINITY IN 1776.

With location of some more modern sites.

Division marks in margins represent projection of center lines of streets and avenues Sites and topographical features are carefully located with reference to these lines: 1. American battery, 1776, whence Washington watched Battle of Harlem Heights 2. American battery, 1776. 3. Matje David's Vly, 1776. Ground embraced between 4 8, 14 and 15 was battlefield of Harlem Heights; eastern portion now called Morningside Heights. 4. Claremont restaurant, 1905 5. Grant's tomb, 1905. 6. Barrier Gate, 1814. 7. Fort Laight, 1814. 8. Blockhouse No. 4, 1814. 9. Blockhouse No. 3, 1814. 10. Barnard College, 1905; bloody buckwheat field, Sept. 16, 1776, 11. Columbia University, 1905. 12. St Luke's Hospital, 1905. 13. Blockhouse No. 2, 1814. 14. Cathedral of St. John the Divine, 1905. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, British fortifications erected 1776; 20 is on the Great Hill (the Circle) in Central Park: 22 is also site of Fort Clinton, 1814; 23 is also site of Nutter's battery, 1814. 24. Fort Fish, 1814. 25. Blockhouse No. 1, 1814. 26. British redoubt, 1776; Benson's Point redoubt, 1814. 27. Mill Rock blocknouse, 1814. 28. American redoubt, evacuated Sept. 15, 1776. 29. Now Mt. Morris Park. (Drawn, 1905, by the author, from whom prints of original 11 inches square can be obtained.)

McGOWN'S PASS, 1905.

View from path leading to 106th street gate, looking northeastward. Harlem Mere visible in background. Continental soldier is standing in the Pass on site of Barrier Gate and Blockhouse.

FORT CLINTON, 1905.

View overlooks northeastern corner of Park. Harlem Mere at base of hill. Houses of 110th street in background.

BLOCKHOUSE No. 1, 1905.

Erected in 1814; still standing. View of western face.

II.

McGOWN'S PASS IN WAR OF THE REVOLUTION.

THE commanding position of McGown's Pass on the main north-and-south highway of Manhattan Island, midway between its extremities, and at a point where the encroachment of Harlem Creek and marsh narrowed the island to a width of only about 2,100 yards, gave this place and the adjacent heights dominating Harlem Plain great strategic value to the military engineer. A British description of New York Island during the Revolution refers to McGown's Pass as a place "where a few troops might stop an army" (47).

The active military history of the place begins with the occupation of the Island by the British on September 15, 1776, although prior to that date many bodies of troops had marched up or down through the Pass, and many a train of heavy wagons or artillery had plodded by the old tavern on the way from or to the then distant City.

After the American defeat on Long Island, August 27, 1776, and the retreat to Manhattan Island, the British manœuvred to "bottle up" the Americans on the Island. Washington saw his peril and by September 10 began the removal of valuable stores from the City preparatory to ulti-

mate evacuation. On September 11, a general council of war voted to evacuate the island below Harlem (2). Then the rumbling of wheels, the crack of whiplashes, and the shouts of drivers urging their burdened beasts over the hill, increased, and through the dust pulverized by pounding hoof and rolling tire tramped many a soldier who was soon to trudge back through this Pass to the City as a prisoner of war. (See page 23.)

On the night of the 14th, Washington had moved his headquarters from the City to the Morris Mansion in 160th street (26), but all the armament and stores were not yet removed from the town, and about 4000 troops still garrisoned various points on the lower half of theIsland (15).

Early on the morning of September 15, 1776, the occupants of the tavern heard a heavy bombardment from the British warships lying in the East River designed to silence the American battery on Horn's Hook (at the foot of East 89th street) and to cover the British landing at Kip's Bay (foot of East 34th street.) The sound reached Washington's Headquarters in 160th street and presently the occupants of McGown's house, looking out of their north windows, might have seen the General approaching at full speed on horseback. The Chief dashed across the bridge, up the hill, past the house, and disappeared in a cloud of dust to the south. Before he arrived at Murray Hill, the British had landed and the American army was in full retreat for the heights above Harlem.

It was well on in the afternoon when the British General Sir Henry Clinton's corps advanced up the Kingsbridge Road toward McGown's Pass. As it neared the latitude of the present 92d street, where the road then entered the territory of Central Park, it encountered Colonel Smallwood's brave Maryland troops which had been posted there

to observe the enemy and cover the retreat of the American Battery at Horn's Hook. Clinton manœuvred to cut off the latter, but they retreated safely up through the Pass to Harlem Heights beyond. These were the only Americans to retreat through the Pass, that day. All the others, from the Connecticut men at Kip's Bay to Putnam's command in the City,—including the troops of Fellows, Parsons, Douglass, Wadsworth, Scott, Silliman and Knox—escaped by way of the Bloomingdale Road on the west side to the heights north of Harlem Plain.

The British troops, going up the east side, turned off into the New Bloomingdale Cross Road, which ran from the Kingsbridge road at 96th street to the Bloomingdale Road (Broadway) at about 93d street, but too late to intercept the Americans. That night, the British outposts took position at the Black Horse Tavern, McGown's Pass, while the main body of the King's Troops stretched clear across Central Park, their right resting on the East River at Horn's Hook and their left on the Hudson at 96th street (16, 54).

An entertaining little story has been printed to the effect that on September 15, 1776, Daniel McGown was with the American army: that his son Andrew, aged twelve, was compelled by the Hessians arriving on the McGown farm to guide them to the American camp; that the boy gaily led the British troops across country toward the North River in a different direction from that taken by the Americans; and that "thus did a boy of twelve save the army of his country from destruction."

The only trouble with this beautiful little story is that it is not true. Daniel McGown, father of Andrew McGown of McGown's Pass, had been dead seventeen years. Andrew was born in 1742 and was therefore thirty-four years old, not a boy of twelve. The next Andrew had not yet

been born, his advent being ten years after this alleged event. (See page 14, ante.) Furthermore, few of the troops escaped by way of McGown's Pass, and if the grown up Andrew had piloted the Hessians toward the North River he would have led them directly to the flying columns escaping by way of the Bloomingdale Road. Much as it pains us to discredit the charming story of the twelve-year-old boy saving the American Army, we feel obliged to leave the honors for this achievement lying, where more strongly entrenched tradition or authentic history has placed them, either at the feet of the hospitable Madam Mary Lindley Murray of Murray Hill, or at the discreetly used heels of the American army itself.

On the next day, September 16, 1776, was fought the Battle of Harlem Heights. At that time, two German battalions under Von Donop occupied McGown's Pass (21). They were Block's and Minegerode's men (27). While the battle was raging over on Morningside Heights, where the Columbia University buildings now stand, the British, feeling the tremendous pressure of the American assault, called for artillery support. There were two three-pounder brass cannon at McGown's Pass under command of Lieut. Wallace of the Royal Artillery, but there were no horses to haul them to the scene of conflict. Capt. John Montresor, aide-de-camp to General Howe, perceiving the situation, had the cannon dragged over by hand. The armies were then contending in the bloody buckwheat field where Barnard College now stands. Nearing the scene, the artillery opened and fired sixty rounds apiece, but it was unable to save the British, who retired to their lines. These were the only cannon used on the battlefield of Harlem Heights (32). Lord Cornwallis is thought to have made his headquarters at the Black Horse tavern on that day (26).

The writer has heard it claimed that Nathan Hale was captured at McGown's Pass when he fell into the British hands on the night of September 21, 1776. This statement must be taken *cum grano salis.* It belongs to that numerous category of plausible fictions which are so misleading to the ready believer and not a little perplexing to the critical historian. Hale might have been captured here, but not a vestige of evidence has come to light up to the present time to prove it. The best authority on Nathan Hale is the painstaking and discriminating work of Prof. Henry P. Johnston published in 1901. Professor Johnston thinks it quite possible that Hale tried to escape from New York through the British lines at Harlem, and gives a hypothetical map of his route on Manhattan Island indicating his effort to pass them near 107th street and North River, but he admits that this is purely speculative. He concludes with the general statement that "the weight of evidence is in favor of New York or vicinity as the place of capture," but as to establishing the exact point his "searches have not met with success as yet" (28).

From Sept. 16 to Oct. 12, 1776, the British were vigorously employed erecting fortifications from McGown's Pass, along the heights in the northern part of Central Park and westward to the North River (24). The following entries in a British orderly book (30) show something of the progress of the work:

"Sept. 20, 1776. All the fascines and pickets to be carried to Jones' house near the North River and to Major Musgrove's advanced post to the left of McGown's House.

"Sept. 21. A working party of 400 men will parade tomorrow and march to McGowan's House.

"Sept. 24. The working party at McGowan's Hill to consist of 200 men only until further orders.

"Sept. 25. The working party at McGowan's Hill will consist of 100 men only till further orders."

There is a manuscript map of this line of defenses in the New York Historical Society (29). The Sauthier map (44) shows a redoubt in 1776 where Fort Clinton was erected, 1814, and another where Nutter's Battery was erected in 1814.

There was evidently an extensive encampment in the western part of Central Park on what was formerly called the Great Hill, now called the Circle, lying between the West Drive and Eighth Avenue opposite 105th street. In making some excavations on the north side of this hill in 1864, the park workmen found about two feet below the surface distinct traces of a military camp. The ground, in spaces about eight feet square, was compactly trodden and in the corner of each space was a recess, rudely built of stone, for a fireplace, with pieces of strap iron fashioned into the shape of pot-hooks. Shot and bayonets were also found in the vicinity (5). Pieces of strap iron, bent into the shape of the letter S for the purpose of hanging kettles over a fire, are almost invariable accompaniments of Revolutionary camp-sites. The writer has excavated many of them on different camp-sites of that period.

The manuscript map (29) of the attack on Fort Washington on Saturday, November 16, 1776, shows Earl Percy's brigade of British troops camped in the northern end of Central Park, right resting on McGown's Pass, and marching through the Pass to the attack. The Sauthier map (44) also shows them proceeding by the same route.

The capture of Fort Washington was followed by the saddest spectacle ever witnessed at McGown's Pass. The scene of the capitulation of Fort Washington was four miles

to the northward. The British casualties were 78 killed and 380 wounded. The Americans had 54 killed and 93 wounded, and surrendered 2818 prisoners (16). About 5 p. m., the prisoners, many of whom had already been plundered by the Hessians and all of whom showed the effects of a desperately fought battle, were formed in detachments and started on their march to New York. About 7 o'clock they began to file through McGown's Pass, the kindly shades of evening veiling their humiliation; and for several hours that night the crisp November air resounded with the tramp of Washington's defeated soldiers on their way to years of suffering, many on their way to death, in the British prisons of the city.

With the capture of Fort Washington, the British secured complete control of Manhattan Island, which they retained for seven years. They therefore had undisturbed possession of McGown's Pass for all that time.

From the nature of the situation, it is impossible to follow the course of events at the Pass during that period with much detail. When we do catch glimpses of the garrison, it appears to be composed of the mercenary troops known under the general term of "Hessians." With the British in secure possession of the island and the waters surrounding it, and with the great demand for troops and guns in other directions, it is not probable that the garrison was large or the armament heavy.

The opening months of the year 1780, however, saw an unusual activity all over the island for a very remarkable reason. In January and February of that year, a cold wave froze up the Hudson River and the Harbor so solid that a detachment of British cavalry marched from Staten Island to New York on the ice and heavy cannon were hauled across the river from Paulus Hook (Jersey City). The

island having been robbed of its insular character and its occupants of their naval advantage, the British apprehended an attack from the Americans, and every post on the Island was on the *qui vive.* "If the enemy (the Americans) had crossed over at Harlem or on the North River anywhere to the south of the line of McGown's Pass, the 42d Regiment, Brigade of Losberg, and the two Anspach Battalions, were to have advanced to positions which Gen. Knyphausen had fixed upon from Col. Clarke's house to the circular redoubt on the East River, and several light field pieces were fixed upon sleighs ready to march to wherever they might be wanted" (36).

The British at this time also established an elaborate system of signals for transmitting alarms from one end of the island to the other, and McGown's Pass, being midway of the island,was the central link in the chain. Upon alarm at King's Bridge, the signal would be passed along to McGown's Pass by firing cannon at Fort Knyphausen (Fort Washington) if by day, or by shooting rockets at the Morris Mansion (160th street) if at night. Then McGown's Pass would pass it along to the 37th Regiment Cantonment near the Dove Tavern, which stood at the northwest corner of 66th street and 3d avenue (26). Thence it would be repeated to the Murray House (at 37th street and Park avenue), Bunker Hill battery (between Center, Grand, Broome and Elizabeth streets), and finally to Fort George. The signal code was adapted to give alarms of attacks from different points by different numbers of shots (36).

Gen. Pattison, to meet other demands, had evidently stripped McGown's Pass of artillery, for on January 25, 1780, his aide-de-camp, Capt. S. P. Adye, wrote to Capt. Nesbitt as follows:

"SIR:

I am directed by Major General Pattison to acquaint you for information of Major General Mathew that being yesterday informed that there was no gun at McGown's Pass to repeat the established signals, the General has ordered out a four-pounder for that purpose. Ammunition is also sent with it in case General Mathew should think proper to have it posted in any situation of defence, as well as for making signals " (36).

For many references to McGown's Pass during the British occupation, we are indebted to Lieut. John Charles Philip Von Krafft, of the Regiment Von Bose, of the mercenary troops. His diary (52) is kept in his native language, and his attempts to render local names phonetically has produced some amusing alphabetical combinations. Hell Gate is rendered "Hell Gött." McGown's name, with rare ingenuity, is spelled differently almost every time he refers to the Pass. He starts off with a highly interesting combination of Hell Gate and McGown's Pass in the reference "Hell Gown's Pass:"

"Aug. 19, 1782. The English Grenadiers and Light Infantry from Long Island encamped at Hell Gowns Pass.

"Sept. 1. The 37th English regiment had encamped on the east side of MacGowns pass where Prince Karl's regiment had been.

"Oct. 2. At 4 p. m. the regiment received orders to march immediately and to encamp until further orders at MaccGown's Pass where Prince Charl's regiment had been.

"Nov. 20. I was detailed from the field to watch with 9 men to McGon's Pass.

"Dec. 15. This morning the detachment which had been stationed at McGoun's Bass (!) and had been detailed from the Body and Prinz Carl regiments returned to their regiments.

"May 20, 1783. At noon the whole garrison of the New

York and Donop's, Prince Carl's and the (Hessian) Body regiment at MaccGoun's Pass had to pass in review before the new Commanding Gen. in Chief, Gen. Carleton, in front of the new line on the east side.

"Sept. 2. This noon, the order came that all should be ready to march to McGow: Pass, and that the foragers and sharp-shooters were to be sent there next morning at 9 o'clock.

"Sept. 5. All measures for the continuation of the war are again seriously undertaken. Our Brigade Grenadiers, Hessians, Landgrave, Bienau, and Knipphaussen regiment are daily expecting orders to march to our camp as laid out (which on account of the dearth of water has been postponed) at McGow's Pass.

"Oct. 25. An order came that Lengecke's Battalion was to go to Paulus Hook before Monday, the 27th, and Blate's Garrison Battalion to McGowns Pass in Barracks with the Yagers."

In the course of time, Lieut. Von Krafft was transferred to a post lower down on the east side, but he evidently enjoyed visiting McGown's Pass, perhaps on account of the cheering company of his compatriots stationed there, perhaps on account of the cheering influence of the sign of the Black Horse. On July 2, 1783, he writes in his diary: "This afternoon I went walking to Macgown's Pass in great melancholy, which has been following me for a long time now. Our Merciful Father protect me from all evil."

To what Lieut. Von Krafft's melancholy was due is a matter of conjecture. Perhaps it was attributable to the mosquitoes at Turtle Bay to which he makes pathetic allusion under other dates. Perhaps it was in consequence of the hot days of which he complains. Perhaps it was due to the physic which he was taking—and which he recorded as faithfully as he chronicled the operations of the army. But *perhaps* it was due to the coquetry of Miss Cornelia de la

Metre, the daughter of a widow residing "past the 5th milestone, King's Bridge road, on New York Island," and the near approach of his departure for Europe. Whatever its cause, the melancholy appears to have been cured almost simultaneously with his secret marriage to Miss de la Metre—a union publicly ratified upon his return to New York the following year. For several years thereafter, Mr. de Krafft, as he then styled himself, supported himself and family by teaching in New York City, and still later became a surveyor in the employ of the United States Treasury Department (52).

The signature of the treaty of peace brought with it preparations for the evacuation of the island. A Philadelphia newspaper account, dated Sept. 13, 1783, says: "Every preparation is making for the speedy evacuation of New York, the heavy ordnance from Fort George being already embarked, and shipping is being taken up in this City to assist in carrying off the garrison and stores" (47).

As the Hessians were the first of the British troops to garrison McGown's Pass, Sept. 15, 1776, so they appear to have been the last to leave it, for under date of Oct. 25, 1783, only a month before evacuation, Von Krafft says: "An order came that Lengecke's Battalion was to go to Paulus' Hook before Monday, the 27th, and Blate's Garrison Battalion to McGowns Pass in barracks with the Yagers" (52).

Under date of New York, Nov. 12, 1783, Sir Guy Carleton wrote to Washington: "The preparations for withdrawing His Majesty's troops from this place are so far advanced that, unless some untoward accident should intervene, I hope it may be accomplished some days before the end of the present month. At all events I propose to relinquish the posts at Kingsbridge and as far as McGown's

Pass inclusive on this island on the 21st inst. . ." The determination to evacuate these posts on the 21st was reiterated by Sir Guy to Washington under date of November 19th (20), and the memoranda of Major George Beckwith (20) gives us almost the hour at which the Pass was to be abandoned. The first four paragraphs of his memoranda read as follows:

"Kings Bridge as well as the Fort and the Works on the Heights within it, will be abandoned on Fryday morning, 21st inst., between 8 and 9 o'clock.

"The barracks at McGowen's, with that part of the island to the northward, will be abandoned on the same day about 10 o'clock in the morning.

"By sending Commissaries, the different barracks will be given up, with such furniture as may be left and in their present order—the works also in their present state—there are a few pieces of old cannon in them.

"Horn's Hook Redoubt on the East River, will be abandoned at the same time with McGowen's pass, provided it is not to be occupied by Gen. Washington till the final evacuation of New York Island."

On Friday, Nov. 21, Gen. Washington and Gov. Clinton arrived at Day's tavern, attended by a number of army officers, members of the Senate and Assembly and other persons of distinction. On that day the Continental troops took possession of McGown's Pass, and stationed their advanced pickets at the Dove Tavern (25, 37, and 51).

Day's tavern was on the Kingsbridge Road, on the line of the present 126th street, 200 feet west of 8th avenue (40). The Dove, as before stated, was at the northwest corner of 66th street and 3d avenue (26).

The force stationed at McGown's Pass consisted of a provisional brigade of about 800 men, composed of detach-

ments of New York and Massachusetts troops encamped at West Point and Newburgh, under Brevet-Brig. General Henry Jackson. Four six-pounder cannon captured from the enemy and now displayed by Major Bauman formed part of the equipment of this command (53).

Here the further approach of the American troops to New York was stayed until the enemy could be withdrawn from neighboring posts and embark. On Nov. 24, in anticipation of the final act of the great Revolutionary Drama which was to occur the next day, Gen. Jackson issued orders dated "McGown's Pass, 24 Nov., '83," ordering the troops to "cook one day's provisions this evening and be in perfect readiness to march to-morrow morning at 8 o'clock" (53). The orders also gave instructions concerning the procedure of the troops upon taking possession of the city the next day.

It is not difficult to picture the scene on those heights on the night of the 24th,—the glowing camp-fires cooking rations for the morrow, the bustle of preparation as the men furbished up their arms and service-worn uniforms, and the animated conversation as they canvassed the events of the coming day.

On the morning of the 25th the camp was astir early. The brigade, under arms, awaited eagerly the courier from the City who was to tell of the final departure of the enemy.

Soon, a British officer in scarlet uniform might have been seen riding up the post road from the south. Reining up his horse and saluting the American officer in command, he announced that the rear-guard of the British army was then embarking at the lower end of the island. The usual civilities having been exchanged, he wheeled about and disappeared down the road to join his departing comrades. A

few short, sharp orders brought the American brigade into marching order, and at the command of "Forward march," the Continentals issued forth from the works at McGown's Pass and began their triumphal march toward New York City. They proceeded in the following order (41, 42) under the general command of General Knox:

A corps of Dragoons, Capt. John Stakes.

Advanced guard of Light Infantry.

A corps of artillery, Col. Ebenezer Stevens.

A battalion of Light Infantry.

A battalion of Massachusetts troops.

Rear-guard, Major John Burnett.

Colonel Stevens, who commanded the artillery, was later Major-General of New York Artillery, and an important figure on these heights in the war of 1812–15 (17).

When they arrived at the beginning of the Bowery Lane they halted, and there remained until about 1 o'clock, when, the British having left their posts in the Bowery, the Americans continued their march and took possession of the city (42).

III.

McGOWN'S PASS IN THE WAR OF 1812–1815.

History frequently walks in her own footprints—which is another way of stating the well-known principle of logic, that like causes produce like effects. The same physical conditions, for instance, which led the British army to occupy the otherwise insignificant hamlet of Yorktown, Va., in 1783,—the striking combination of high-river bluff, deep ravines, and precipitous inland slopes,—attracted the Confederate army to it as a coign of military vantage in 1862. Human annals are replete with similar repetitions.

It is not surprising therefore, that when, in the second war with Great Britain, the frontier of actual hostilities approached New York City, the heights in the northern part of Central Park and vicinity should again become the scene of military activity.

The declaration of war was made by the Congress of the United States, June 18, 1812 (54). At first, attention was given to manning and strengthening existing fortifications and building new ones at the Battery and other environs of New York Harbor. For two years the defenses of the City were conducted upon the hypothesis that the enemy would assail the City only by ships, and quite regardless of the fact that he might land within 8 or 10 miles of the City, either on Long Island or Manhattan Island, and attack the City from the east and north, as he did in September and November, 1776 (9).

In 1814, with the British Commander-in-Chief lying at Bermuda and gathering his forces for a descent somewhere —whether upon New Orleans, Norfolk, Washington, Baltimore, New York, or Newport the Americans did not know —and with the knowledge of the defenselessness of the City on flank and rear, the military and municipal authorities realized the necessity of protecting themselves in new directions.

About the end of May, Gen. Joseph G. Swift, Chief of Engineers and Superintendent of Land Fortifications, with Governor Tompkins, commander of the Third Military District of the United States and Mayor DeWitt Clinton, examined the northern approaches of New York, and Gen. Swift gave his opinion that the heights skirting the Harlem Plains on the South and West should be fortified (17). In July, secret intelligence was received of an intended attack on the City by the enemy (49), intelligence which seemed to be confirmed by the appearance of a fleet off Sandy Hook.

This stimulated a forcible report to the Common Council, July 14, by its special Committee of Defense, urging the construction of fortifications in Brooklyn and at Hell Gate (9), and on the same day, the corner-stone for Fort Stevens at Hallets Point was laid (17).

The bombardment of Stonington, Conn., Aug. 10, 1814 (38), disclosed the presence of the British in the Sound with startling certainty, and enforced the necessity for swift preparations to defend the City on the north.

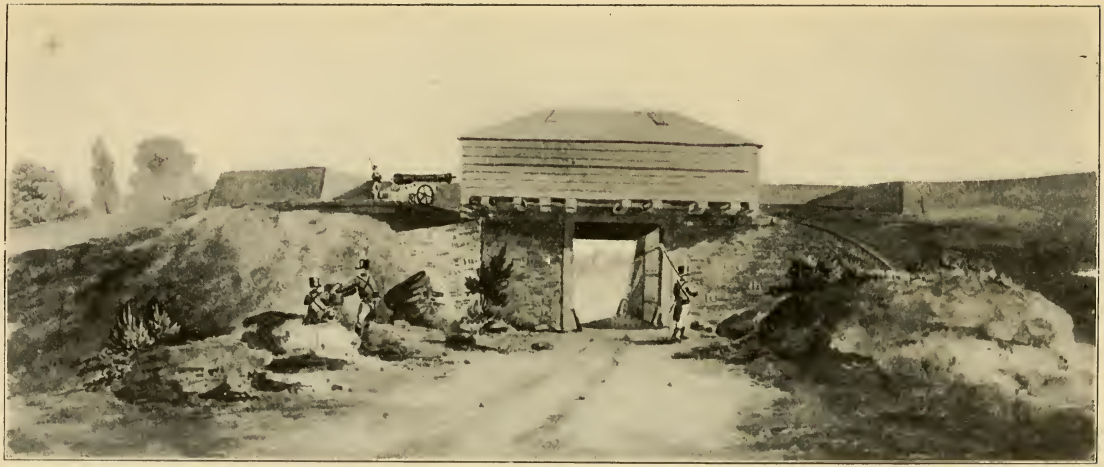
On Thursday morning, August 18th, the Common Council of the City, with 200 men employed by the Corporation at Bellevue who volunteered their services, commenced a fort at McGown's Pass under a federal salute from Capt. Messerve's troop of flying artillery. The work was named Fort Clinton (34) obviously in honor of Mayor DeWitt

FORT CLINTON AND HARLEM CREEK, 1814.

View toward the east. (From Holland's water-color.)

FORT FISH, FORT CLINTON AND NUTTER'S BATTERY, 1814.

View toward northeast. Fort Fish in foreground. Fort Clinton at right of middle ground. Nutter's Battery at left. Harlem River in background. From Holland's water-color.)



BARRIER GATE AND BLOCKHOUSE AT McGOWN'S PASS, 1814.

View toward the northeast, in same direction as view of 1905 opposite page 16. (From Holland's water-color.)

Clinton. The Committee of Defense,* in its formal announcement of this event in the New York Columbian of August 19, 1814, says: "This work is the commencement of a chain of forts to be erected on Harlem Heights for the defence of this city, under Gen. Swift, in the construction of which the Committee of defence calculate upon the aid of their patriotic fellow citizens, as in the erection of those on Long Island." (34).

The chain of fortifications, of which those at McGown's Pass formed a part, was as follows: A redoubt on Benson's Point, near 3d avenue and 106th street; those at McGown's Pass, to be described more in detail hereafter; the stone tower generally called "blockhouse No. 1," in the northwestern part of Central Park, about fourteen yards south of 109th street and seven yards west of 7th avenue; a stone tower between 113th and 114th streets and 9th and 10th avenues; a stone tower on the south side of 121st street about 110 yards east of 10th avenue: a stone tower on the south side of 123d street about fifty-four yards east of 10th avenue; and Fort Laight, at Manhattanville, about twenty yards north of 124th street and 120 yards east of 11th avenue (39, 48).

Before describing more particularly the works at McGown's Pass, a word may be said concerning the interesting landmark in the northwestern part of the Park, before alluded to. This tower and the remains of the similar stone

* The following served on the Committee of Defense of the Common Council during the years 1812–15; Alderman Nicholas Fish, lawyer; John Morss, mason; Peter Mesier, flour merchant; Thomas Carpenter, merchant; Geo. Buckmaster, retired; and Thomas R. Smith, merchant; and Assistant Alderman Samuel Jones, Jr., lawyer; Peter Hawes, lawyer; John Drake, merchant; John Mitchie, starch m'f'r; Joseph W. Brackett, lawyer; Gideon Tucker, dealer in Plaster of Paris; Jonas Mapes, merchant tailor; and Isaac S. Douglass, merchant.

tower at 123d street have been marked by tablets by the Women's Auxiliary to the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society.

The tablet on the Central Park tower reads as follows:

THIS BLOCKHOUSE
WAS PART OF A LINE OF FORTIFICATIONS
EXTENDING FROM THE HUDSON TO THE
HARLEM RIVER. BUILT FOR THE DEFENCE
OF NEW YORK BY ITS PATRIOTIC CITIZENS
DURING THE WAR OF 1812–1815.
THIS TABLET IS ERECTED BY
THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY TO THE AMERICAN SCENIC
AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION SOCIETY.
A. D. 1905.

This structure, called a "tower" by Randel and a "blockhouse" by Swift, is about thirty-four feet square at the base. The height—or depth—of the walls varies on account of the unevenness of the great rock on which they are built. The western wall measures nineteen feet from top to ground. The walls have a decided batter, to increase their stability. The flat roof is about five feet below the coping. The blockhouse has, or had, two small apertures in each wall. It did not, as commonly supposed, have an overhanging second story, with machicolations or loopholes in the overhung floor so that a plunging fire could be directed against an enemy in close attack. Existing illustrations depict such a construction on Mill Rock in the East River and directly over the barrier gate at McGown's Pass; but the four "blockhouses," of which the Central Park blockhouse was No. 1, were not of the typical blockhouse construction. Gen. Swift's description (48) shows that they were designed to mount on their terraces, en barbette, a single heavy traversing gun each—that is, a cannon which

could be aimed in any direction. The "terrace" in this work is the sunken roof, constituting the platform of the gun.

The portion of the wall rising about breast high above the level of the terrace is the parapet. A gun mounted to fire over a parapet instead of through an embrasure is called "en barbette." The principle of these towers was the same as that of the picturesque Martello Towers which one sees at Kingston and Quebec, Canada. The Martello towers, while round instead of square, and more ingeniously constructed than the towers on Harlem Heights, mounted a single heavy piece each, en barbette, on an elevated terrace, just as the latter were designed to do.

The Harlem Heights towers were within supporting distance of each other, and near enough for the interchange of grapeshot. Gen. Swift's report indicates that they had not been mounted with guns when the troops were mustered out in December, 1814 (48).

The principal works at McGown's Pass were three in number, occupying commanding elevations at the angles of an almost equilateral triangle measuring about 550 or 600 feet on a side. The largest and highest was on the little plateau just west of the East Drive opposite the present McGown's Pass Tavern, at an elevation of 89 feet above tide-water. This was called Fort Fish, obviously in honor of Nicholas Fish, chairman of the Committee of Defense. It was an open earthwork, mounting five guns of heavy calibre (4, 23, 48.) The breastworks are now gone, but the flat plateau is easily recognized.

The second work was Fort Clinton, an earthwork occupying the summit of the rock overlooking Harlem Mere, 600 feet east of Fort Fish, at an elevation of nearly 50 feet. It mounted three pieces. Two old pieces, deeply pitted with rust,

have for many years been on the ground at this site. The American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society in 1904 and again in 1905 urged the Commissioner of Parks to mount these interesting relics and to monument the site. The breastwork here is clearly traceable. Fort Clinton, as previously mentioned, was named after Mayor DeWitt Clinton. As nearly as we can judge from contemporary maps, it occupies the site of one of the Revolutionary redoubts.

Five hundred and fifty feet to the northward of Fort Clinton and 600 northeast of Fort Fish, on an advantageous point 45 feet above the water, was built a work called Nutter's Battery, mounting one piece. The Battery appears to have derived its name from Valentine Nutter, whose house stood a few rods to the northward, on the line of 6th avenue between 109th and 110th streets (39) on the old Nutter farm referred to on page 9, Nutter's Battery occupied the site of a revolutionary redoubt.

Fort Clinton was connected on the east with the head of the natural barrier presented by Harlem Creek by a breastwork and ditch. It was also connected with Nutter's Battery by a breastwork of which very prominent vestiges remain. About midway between Fort Clinton and Nutter's Battery the Post Road crossed the line of this breastwork. Here was erected a barrier gate, surmounted by a blockhouse flanked on each side by a one-gun battery. This site can be recognized by the gap between the end of the breastwork which comes down the hill from Fort Clinton and the prominent rock a rod to the northward.

Nutter's Battery was connected with Fort Fish by a breastwork which can be traced for quite a distance from the Battery.

Immediately at the foot of these works on the west are the valley and stream before referred to. This side was ob-

structed by a strong abattis (an entanglement of felled trees), commanded by the guns of Fort Fish (48). The works at McGown's Pass were erected under the immediate direction of Major Horn (48). The work was performed chiefly by volunteer citizens. As already mentioned, the work here was initiated by volunteers from Bellevue, and they were followed by almost every conceivable class of men—the Society of Tammany, the students of Columbia College, medical students, the Marine Society, the Society of Tallow Chandlers, butchers, members of the bar, Free Masons, firemen, Sons of Erin, colored citizens, etc. They worked by daylight and they worked by moonlight, in their eagerness to complete the security of the City (34).

A typical example of the enthusiasm with which these volunteers went about their work is afforded by a party of the Master Butchers' Association who worked at McGown's Pass in the latter part of September. Bright and early in the morning they started from the City on their six-mile march for Harlem, headed by a brass band. They carried a large banner bearing the following inscription, the last line referring to their recent work on the Brooklyn fortifications:

"Friends of Our Country
Free Trade and Butchers' Rights
From Brooklyn's Fields to Harlem Heights."

By sun-down, they had thrown up and neatly sodded a breastwork east of Fort Clinton about 100 feet long, 20 feet thick and 4 feet high (17.)

Harlem Heights was then about six miles from the City, and the distance was so great that there were fewer volunteers here than for the Brooklyn Defenses. To save them a six-mile tramp daily, boats were run from the city to

Harlem, and many sightseers availed themselves of these excursions to witness the progress of the work.

On August 31, 1814, the New York Columbian said:

"The fortifications at M'Gown's Pass on the Harlem road have acquired a great degree of strength and perfection and are worth a day's work to go and see them. They are compact and regular and nearly ready for cannon and artillerists."

On Sept. 20, 1814, the Columbian said: "With the fair weather at the commencement of this week, the labor of completing the works for the defence of this city is resumed. . . . The works at Harlem Heights are numerous, compact, and judiciously placed, and form a romantic and picturesque view, as well as impassable barrier to an enemy's march."

On September 30, McGown's and the adjacent heights were garrisoned by a brigade of 1,600 State militia under Brig.-Gen. Heermance. There were altogether serving in the 3rd Military District of New York at that time 15,000 militia and 1,000 sea fencibles (19).

An order from the Adjutant-General's office dated Nov. 3, 1814, reads as follows:

"Brigadier-General Curtenius will detail from his Brigade a detachment of 400 exclusive field and company officers to relieve the guard and fatigue party from General Mapes's Brigade, stationed at McGowan's Pass, Harlaem, on Saturday, the 5th inst. The Brigade Quartermaster will see that the detachment is properly supplied for one week. It will occupy the Cantonment of General Mapes's Detachment" (19).

In November, 1814, Governor Tompkins made a tour of all the city's fortifications. On the 11th he reached Harlem Heights, inspected the works at McGown's Pass, and re-

viewed the whole brigade commanded by General Heermance (34).

On December 2, the three-months term of enlistment of a large portion of the militia expired, and as that date approached, and the prospects of peace were bright, preparations were made for mustering out. On Nov. 21, Heermance's Brigade, with others, was ordered to be mustered and inspected for pay as soon as possible with a view to its discharge on December 2d.

The events of the next few weeks proved the hopes for peace to be well grounded. On December 24, 1814, the treaty of Ghent was signed, and the first months of 1815 saw McGown's Pass deserted.

IV.

MOUNT ST. VINCENT AND CENTRAL PARK.

In describing the military events at McGown's Pass during the two wars with Great Britain we have dropped the narrative of its civil history, and must go back a few years to pick it up again.

Soon after the Revolution, the tavern at McGown's Pass appears to have passed into the possession, but not ownership, of one Legget, for on a road map made by Christopher Colles in 1789 the tavern is called "Legget's" (47). Legget's was still a famous refectory in the closing years of the 18th century (53). A view of "Legget's Halfway Tavern" appears in Volume VIII. of the "Public Papers of George Clinton" opposite page 292 (20). The Black Horse Tavern stood until 1808 (26).

In 1790, the old Dyckman-McGown stone house was torn down, and a more commodious frame dwelling erected a little to the northward, part being on the old foundation (33).

The property remained in the possession of the McGown family until December 1, 1845. On that date, the executors and heirs-at-law of Andrew McGown, Sr., deceased, deeded to Thos. B. Odell, in consideration of the sum of $6,000, 6.958 acres of land lying on the east side of the King's Bridge road between 102d street and 107th street (11). For those who are interested in the line of the old King's

Bridge road at this point, the boundaries of the property as mentioned in the deed are here given. The line begins at the intersection of the northerly line of 104th street with the easterly line of King's Bridge road, and runs:

	Degrees	Minutes		Feet
Thence along said line North	28	25	East	153
" " " " "	52	5	"	216
" " " " "	57	25	"	74
" " " " "	77	10	"	133
" " " " "	49	30	"	94
Thence South	1	25	"	243
" "	8	10	"	84
" "	0	0	"	67
" "	13	10	West	50
" "	46	20	"	21
" "	23	40	"	200
" "	82	20	"	94
" "	76	15	"	20
" "	69	40	"	313
" "	73	0	"	50
" "	77	25	"	52
To the King's Bridge Road.				
Thence along said road North	10	50	East	363
" " " " "	24	20	"	37
To the place of beginning.				

The heirs-at-law of Andrew McGown, Sr., deceased, who executed this deed were Margaret McGown, his widow; Andrew McGown, Jr. (with Elizabeth, his wife); Samson B. McGown (with Caroline, his wife); and Margaret E., wife of Isaac Adriance. The executors were Margaret, Andrew and Samson B. McGown.

It may be noted in passing that in this deed, the name is spelled " McGown " invariably.

Odell retained the property only sixteen months, when this identical tract passed into the possession of a charitable and educational institution of so much importance and repu-

tation that for many years the name McGown's Pass was completely superseded and the place became known as Mount Saint Vincent.

This famous institution was the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. The mother society was instituted by Elizabeth Seton in Emmitsburg, Md., in 1809. In 1817 the the Sisters were summoned by Bishop Connolly to New York where a new mission was formed. In 1846, this New York branch, then numbering thirty-three, was erected into a separate and independent community, of which Sister Elizabeth Boyle was first Mother Superior (1.)

On April 1, 1847, Thomas B. Odell deeded to Elizabeth Boyle the tract of nearly seven acres above described for a consideration of $6,000, Sister Elizabeth assuming a mortgage which Odell had placed upon the property (12.)

During the Revolution, the Island of Manhattan had been denuded of all trees except a few fruit orchards. Part of this denudation was for military purposes and part was in order to secure fire-wood. Fire-wood was so scarce, that old ships were broken up to supply fuel (36.) At the time of the occupation of the McGown's Pass property by the Academy and Convent of St. Vincent, a fine growth of sixty-four years had clothed the hills and valleys with verdure. The advancing tide of population of the great city was still five or six miles distant, and the region still possessed its rural charm.

The old-fashioned wooden mansion at McGown's Pass of which the Sisterhood took possession contained two stories of four rooms each and attic, and had outside balconies from which the views were unsurpassed (1, 43.) Over the trees one could see the East and Harlem Rivers, and Long Island Sound, with their clusters of green islands in the sparkling waters and the passing sails of countless vessels plying

between New York and Long Island, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In the eastern foreground nestled the ancient little village of Harlem. To the south was Yorkville; to the west Bloomingdale and to the northwest Manhattanville (1.)

On May 2, 1847, Bishop Hughes celebrated Mass in the southwest parlor of the old house, thus consecrating the spot to a great work (1.) Early in 1847, a north wing was added, and in this the first commencement exercises were held September 8, 1847. In 1848, the south wing was built. There was an old barn on the premises which was converted into a laundry. In 1850, a large structure containing a study hall, recreation hall and class rooms was built; and a two story stone house was erected on the northwest as a residence for the chaplain. About this time a Free School was opened in a small building, either purchased or erected, in the ravine. The pupils came from the surrounding country and probably numbered about fifty or sixty. Lastly, in 1855, a stately brick edifice, containing a beautiful chapel and large dining rooms, completed the group of academic buildings (43.)

Meanwhile, this center of religious and educational activity was threatened by the movement for the creation of Central Park. The law authorizing the building of Central Park from 59th street to 106th street which was passed in 1853 took in part of the Mount St. Vincent property. The report of the Commissioners of estimate and assessment was confirmed by the supreme court on Feb. 5, 1856, (18.) On December 20, 1856, the Sisters of Charity bought the estate of Edwin Forrest called Font Hill,* now Mt. St. Vincent-on-the-Hudson, fifteen miles from the City Hall, and in 1858 they

* From the family name of La Font, former owners.

held their last Commencement Exercises at McGown's Pass. This noble sisterhood now numbers 1360 (43).

That portion of Central Park lying between 106th street and 110th street, containing the fortifications of which we have spoken, was added to the Park in 1863 (18.)

The Sisters of Charity, however, had not for saken the spot forever; neither were the martial associations of the locality ended. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 soon brought in its melancholy train the need for hospitals and nurses, and the old Mt. St. Vincent buildings were taken by the Government for the care of wounded soldiers. Here, the Sisters of Charity continued to devote themselves to the relief of those who found refuge, care and comfort in the wards of their old Convent and Academy home until the close of the War in 1865 (4, 7.)

The Commissioners then utilized some of the buildings for administrative offices. But the ghosts of departed publicans hovered over the spot and the ancient traditions of the tavern site could no longer brook interruption. The Commissioners of Central Park, therefore, on Oct. 19, 1866, authorized Comptroller Andrew H. Green to lease the Mt. St. Vincent buildings, or such part thereof as might be necessary, to Alexander Mc C. Stetson for a refreshment house, the Commissioners reserving the right to regulate the kind of refreshments sold (7.)

On December 13th of the same year the Comptroller was authorized to put the brick building formerly used for a convent chapel in order for use as a statuary gallery and museum. Thus, while one portion of the Mt. St. Vincent buildings ministered to the appetites of those who visited these then remote parts, another was converted into a temple of art, concerning whose future as a home of the Muses the Commissioners entertained high expectations (6). With

provisions for meeting such a wide range of physical and intellectual wants, the buildings constituted the home of a veritable "happy family," consisting of the landscape gardeners, the engineers and the police, not to mention Mine Host Stetson and the curator of statuary to Fame unknown.

Stetson's tenure ended about March 13, 1872, when the tavern privilege was let to Radford & Ryan, but the name Stetson's hotel clung to the place for several years afterwards. Columbus Ryan was a Superintendent in the Park, and, either in partnership with Radford, as Radford & Ryan, or alone; or in partnership with someone else, as Ryan & Co., he was identified with the tavern up to the fire of 1881 (7).

About 5.20 o'clock on the morning of January 2, 1881, fire broke out in the basement of the frame building used as a hotel and extended to the brick building used as the art gallery. Both were destroyed. The fire was due to a defective fireplace. The report of the fire department gives the area of the hotel as 125 x 75, and the area of the art building as 75 x 100 (14). The statuary was rescued and stored in the arsenal building at the lower end of the Park (7). The hotel, although occupied by Ryan & Co., was still called Stetson's Hotel by some at this period (40).

Within a week after the fire, the New York Municipal Society filed with the Park Board a formal protest against the erection of another refreshment house, and citizens filed counter petitions in favor of a new restaurant. In June, 1881, the Commissioners ordered the ruins cleared away, the walls leveled, the material covered with mold, and the ground planted with creeping vines. Thereupon the controversy subsided without the manning of the old redoubts or actual hostilities on this already sufficiently historic spot. The site remained unoccupied for two years,

and then, in 1883, the present tavern was built and the ancient uses of the spot revived. On June 6, 1883, the place was licensed to C. S. Conklin (7).

Owing to the confusion arising from the duplication of the name of "Mt. St. Vincent," Mother Jerome, of the Sisters of Charity at the new Mt. St. Vincent-on-the-Hudson, requested the Commissioners to abolish that name from the Central Park map, and that was formally done April 16, 1884 (7).

On October 8, 1885, Conklin was authorized to transfer his lease of the tavern to Patrick McCann, a brother-in-law of Richard Croker, and McCann "held the fort" so to speak, for nearly five years. On March 6, 1890, the Commissioners authorized leasing the place to Gabriel Case, who who kept it for fourteen years (7).

On January 3, 1891, the Commissioners of Central Park, who had continued to call the place "Mt. St. Vincent" informally, in spite of their resolution abolishing the name, formally voted to adopt another designation (7), and so the historic old name of McGown's Pass has come into use again with almost everybody except the old stage drivers in the Park who perversely insist on calling it Mt. St. Vincent to this day.

On March 1, 1904, the present courteous host, John L. Scherz, assumed control of McGown's Pass Tavern, and there looks out for the wants of the public in a manner worthy of the traditions of that ancient hostelry.

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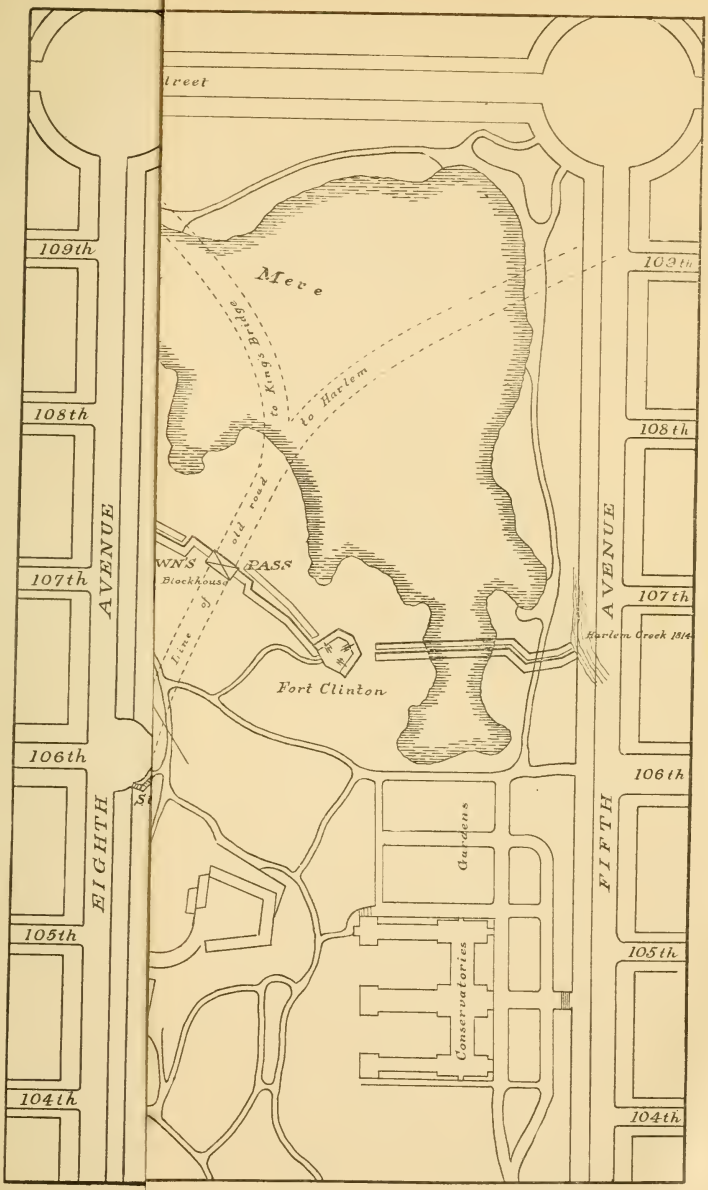
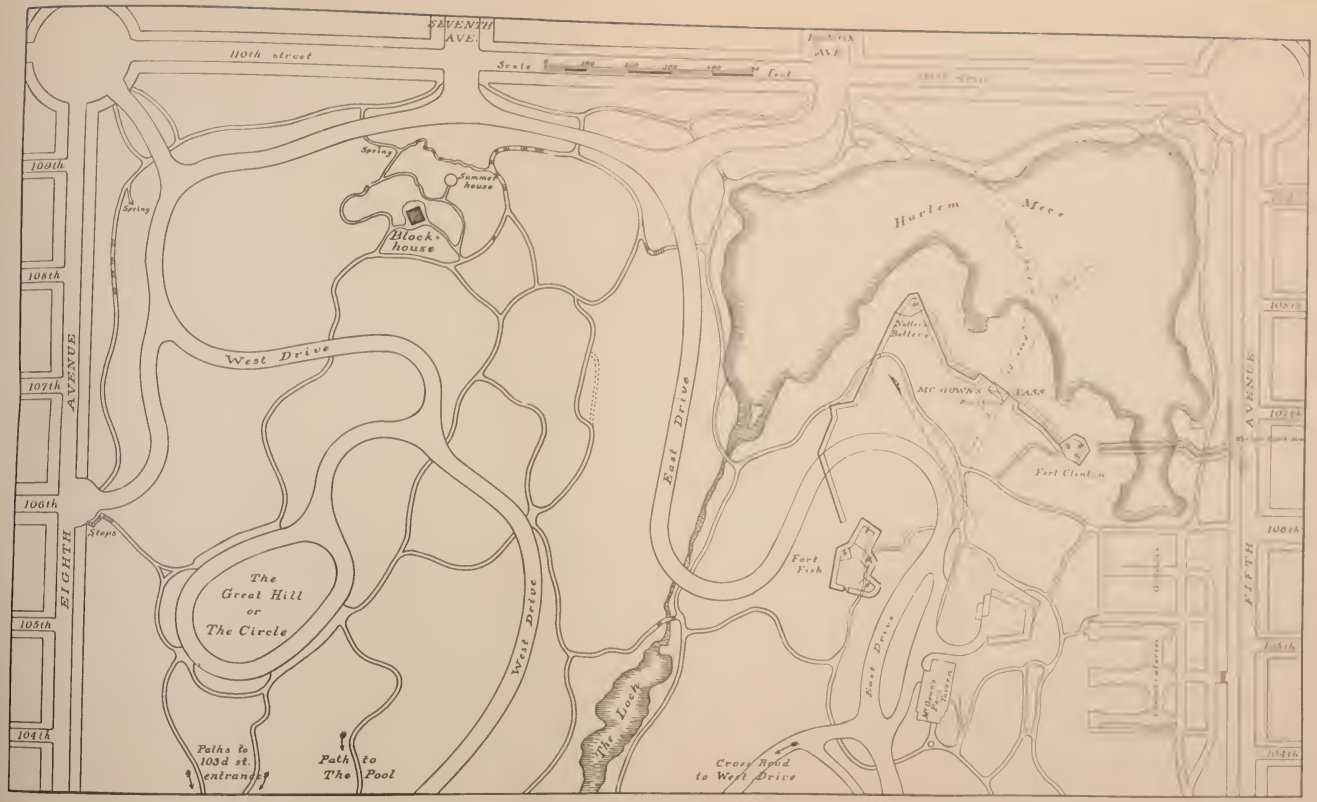

Street
109th
108th
107th
106th
105th
104th
EIGHTH AVENUE
FIFTH AVENUE
Mere
to Kings Bridge
to Harlem
old road
Line of
PASS
Blockhouse
Fort Clinton
Gardens
Conservatories
Harlem Creek 1814

author, 1905



MAP OF CENTRAL PARK NORTH OF 110th STREET 1911

Upon which has been drawn, to the same scale Gen Swift's plan of the fortifications at McGowan's Pass 1814 Drawn by the

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